

Freedom

October 31, 2004

Watch

*Infantry 'brothers' build bond
Cover Story page 8*

*Coalition Soldiers pay visit to adopted village
Page 4*

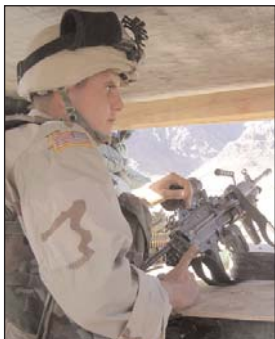


Courtesy photo

Bachata!

Soldiers from the Joint Logistics Command, CJTF-76, dance to bachata music, a guitar-based style that began in the Dominican Republic and spread throughout Latin America, during a Hispanic Heritage Month celebration on Bagram Air Base Oct. 14.

Contents



Spc. Stephen Rzucidlo, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Rgt., stands watch in a guard tower at A-Camp Lane in Zabul Province in southern Afghanistan. He is a member of a squad of infantrymen who recently started working together and have built a bond and brotherhood during their time in Afghanistan.

See cover story Page 8

Cover photo by Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons

Page 3: Sailors run for their service's birthday on Bagram Air Base

Page 4: TF Pirate adopts local village, provides medical assistance ►

Page 5: Soldiers run AAFES facility at FOB, provide comfort items to troops

Page 6: Howitzer section continually strives for perfection



Page 7: National PRT helps rebuild Kuchi Tribal School in Afghan capital

Page 9: 455th Civil Engineer Flight disposes of unexploded ordnance around Bagram Air Base

◀ **Page 10:** Fire-finding radar part of defense from anti-Coalition militants

Page 11: Legal seminar gives new Afghan leaders insight into legal system

Page 12: CMA reaches Paktika residents

Page 13: Safeguarding the Coalition: Leaders responsible for weapons safety

Page 15: Soldier-run radio station entertains Kandahar Airfield listeners ►



Freedom Watch

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Navy celebrates 229 years of service

Story by Navy Lt. Tre Costello
VAQ-133 Public Affairs Officer

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Three officers from VAQ-133 celebrated the Navy's 229th birthday Oct. 13 by running the perimeter of Bagram Air Base carrying the First Navy Jack.

The historical standard is easily recognizable by its distinctive rattlesnake emblem superimposed on a red and white striped background and the motto "Don't tread on me" written in bold letters across the bottom.

The First Navy Jack was introduced in 1775 and the rattlesnake was a traditional symbol of resistance to British repression in Colonial America. The flag was flown on vessels of the Continental Navy throughout the Revolutionary War but was replaced in 1777 by the Union Jack which has been flown on U.S. Naval vessels, with only brief exceptions, ever since.

The flag has enjoyed resurgence in popularity since the Navy began flying the First Navy Jack again following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Secretary of the Navy Gordon R. England directed that the flag be flown on all U.S. Navy ships during the Global War on Terrorism as "an historic reminder of the nation's and Navy's origin and will to persevere and triumph."

VAQ-133 is an EA-6B "Prowler" squadron from Whidbey Island, Washington, deployed to Bagram Air Base for a six-month tour providing electronic jamming support for Operation Enduring Freedom.

The squadron, also known as the "Wizards," is one of only three elite Navy Prowler squadrons that is not assigned to a carrier air wing, but instead conducts operations from shore-based, forward deployed stations.

Running the perimeter road with the flag was the idea of Wizard Safety Officer Navy Lt. Cmdr. Jason "Gump" Temple.

"I wanted to do something special to celebrate the Navy's birthday," he said. "And since we're on an Army base, I thought showing the Navy Jack would remind people that the Navy is in town."

"Wherever I've been stationed, the Navy birthday has



ADAN Shawna Kramermills

Navy Lts. Siddhartha Herdegen (left) and Jason Crowley and Navy Lt. Cmdr. Jason Temple run the perimeter of Bagram Air Base Oct. 13 to celebrate the U.S. Navy's 229th birthday.

always been a big deal, but here it barely gets recognized, so I wanted to bring it to people's attention."

Temple recruited Navy Lts. Siddhartha "Buck" Herdegen and Jason "Elvis" Crowley to run with him. The three took turns carrying the flag as they ran along the rough and rocky trail.

While vehicles kicked up dust as they passed, they also frequently elicited shouts of encouragement and support.

The 10K perimeter road is familiar territory to Herdegen who completed his 500th mile at Bagram on the Navy's birthday. He has been running steadily since arriving in Afghanistan two and a half months ago, logging an average of seven miles a day. "I run to help pass the time," said Herdegen.

"I'd like to reach 1,500 miles before the end of our tour here. But whether or not I reach that goal, I'll continue to run because I enjoy the wonderful feeling I get when I'm running."

Crowley, on the other hand, runs infrequently and rarely over three miles at a time.

"I wasn't very enthusiastic about the run," confessed Crowley. "But I did it out of unit pride."

"I know I'm going to be sore tomorrow," he beamed after the grueling run. "But I'm glad I did it. It feels good to push yourself beyond your limits, especially when you do it for something bigger than yourself."



The First Navy Jack was flown by vessels of the Continental Navy as a symbol of resistance during the early years of the Revolutionary War.

Adopt a Village visit delivers medical aid

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt.

Monica R. Garreau
17th Public Affairs Detachment

JILDALEK, Afghanistan — The children of Jildalek village gathered on the side of a hill to watch as the Soldiers of Task Force Pirate unloaded supplies from three CH-47 Chinook helicopters.

The Oct. 14 scene was a repeat of several other visits to the village by the task force, but with a large exception. This time, a group of Soldiers came along to provide medical and veterinary assistance to the villagers.

On previous visits the Soldiers delivered hundreds of pairs of shoes and many other clothing items. But after many successful visits to their adopted village of Jildalek, the Soldiers of TF Pirate realized it was time to deliver more than humanitarian assistance to this small village in central Afghanistan.

“(During the visit) we didn’t distribute any HA because we didn’t want to take the focus

away from the medical and veterinary (clinics),” said Chief Warrant Officer Layne Pace, TF Pirate Safety officer.

On previous visits to Jildalek, Pace and the Soldiers were frequently approached by individuals seeking medical care.

“Every time we go out there we have a line of people,” he said.

To reduce the number of villagers in need of medical aid, a team of medical professionals from Task Force Victory, Joint Task Force Wings and Task Force 325th Combat Support Hospital all located on Bagram Air Base, accompanied the TF Pirate Soldiers to the village. A group of volunteers was also brought along to assist with the veterinary clinic, as well as a small team of medics to assist the doctors in screening patients.

Bringing along assistants greatly increased the number of patients who were able to be seen and treated in the four short hours in the village, said Col. Steve Jones, TF Victory surgeon.



A Jildalek villager receives heartburn medication from Lt. Col. Margaret Sullivan (left), TF 325th CSH, during the medical and veterinary mission in Jildalek village Oct. 14.

“We were able to do a fair amount of good in the short period of time that we were on the ground,” he said.

In all, 71 men and 172 women and children were seen by the doctors. But the veterinary clinic, which treated 551 animals that day, benefited the most by the extra help.

“They were able to see that many because of all the help they had from Task Force

Pirate,” said Jones.

The villagers also did their own fair share of assisting.

“The village did a very good job of trying to get those patients (to us) who really needed to be seen,” he said. “Most of the people we saw had significant medical problems that we were able to help them with, including several patients that we identified that would benefit from surgery at the Egyptian hospital (on Bagram).”

Two villagers were even selected by the doctors to accompany the Soldiers back to Bagram the same day for advanced treatment at the Egyptian hospital. This is a technique that has worked for at least one Jildalek villager — young Halema who received corrective eye surgery and treatment at the American and Egyptian hospitals on Bagram.

Since all of the Soldiers involved in the Adopt a Village missions are volunteers seeking to get “outside the wire” and interact with the Afghan people, most typically enjoy their time spent in the village, said Pace.

“I’ve had troops come up to me after a mission and say, ‘This one mission has made my whole year,’ ” he said.



Lt. Col. John Smyrski, JTF Wings flight surgeon, administers medicine to an Afghan baby showing symptoms of a cold.

AAFES brings comfort items forward

Story and photo by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RIPLEY, Afghanistan — Oreo cookies, salsa, and shoestring potatoes. These are the fastest selling items at the Tarin Kowt Post Exchange located on Forward Operating Base Ripley in southeastern Afghanistan.

Troops rush in to grab these and other comfort items stocked inside the tiny store as soon as the doors open. The three-month old Army and Air Force Exchange facility is located in a small conex nestled among the many tents, camouflage nets and barbed wire that make up the base.

"A lot of people don't know about us until they come here," said Spc. Christian Labarca, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment.

Labarca performs the duties of cashier and assistant manager for the store.

"We just want everyone to know that we're open to serve (troops)," he said.

Labarca operates the cash register seven days a week, greeting customers as they select their daily purchases.

Staff Sgt. Juan Gachet, HHC, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., performs the managerial duties for the store.

"We're very far away from home," said Gachet. "This is another way to make this place feel like home, make us feel a

little closer to things."

Despite its small size, the store is having a big impact on the Soldiers' morale.

"It's nice having this type of luxury — especially being out here. At first we didn't even have electricity," said Gachet.

"We haven't had too much stuff here, so the littlest things, like even chips, can make a Soldier smile, make them happier," said Sgt. Ron Villareal, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., team leader.

Fortunately, the Tarin Kowt Post Exchange sells more than just chips. The store has a variety of snacks, soft drinks, magazines, personal hygiene products and military clothing items like socks and T-shirts.

Every two weeks, the store is re-supplied by the Kandahar Airfield PX. Products are sent to the FOB by jingle trucks or on aircraft during re-supply missions.

In addition to running the store on FOB Ripley, the PX Soldiers also make monthly visits to Forward Operating Bases Cobra and Anaconda to bring



Sgt. Ron Villareal, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., gathers his purchases as he leaves the Tarin Kowt PX on FOB Ripley. The facility is run by Soldiers in conjunction with AAFES.

snacks, personal hygiene products and other basics to troops serving there.

"Our Soldiers are risking their lives out there everyday. It's important for us as the Army and especially as AAFES — and as a Soldier — to do (our) part at least to go down there and provide them with what they need, and try and help them out in anyway that we can," said Labarca.

"Every time I see a Soldier smile, I feel like we're contributing something good and raising morale, no matter how small," said Gachet. "It's the little things that make the Soldiers feel better."

Enduring Voices

How has your quality of life improved during the course of your tour?



Marine Maj. J.W. Gootee
Task Force Red Dog
"This is my second tour and the quality of life is twice what it was the first time. This time we have showers."



Navy Corpsman Justin Roberson
3rd Bn., 6th Marines
"We now have hot lunch instead of MREs — and more recreation."



Spc. Marcus Wilson
Co. A., 528th Eng. Bn.
"At first we only had tents, and now there are buildings being built."



Marine Staff Sgt. John Gogan
3rd Bn., 6th Marines
"The chow has improved since the first time I was here."

Speed, precision ultimate artillery goal

Story and photos by

Sgt. Frank Magni

17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan — To see them operate is like watching a meticulously choreographed routine. Each in his place, reacting instinctively to numbers and commands — so polished and prepared one member of the team can anticipate the actions of another.

While most observers are just in awe of the sheer power of an M-119 or M-198 howitzer, the procedures and details that go into firing these weapons can seem insignificant. But to members of a howitzer section, the procedures and details are their primary mission and the very reason for accuracy, said Capt. Brendan Raymond, Battery F, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, commander.

"We are accurate because we rely heavily on the efficiency and precision of every member of the battery," said Raymond.

For members of Btry. F, the stakes are too high not to execute each fire mission with as much precision as possible.

"If we fail, we could kill friendly forces down range," said Staff Sgt. Alwin Antonio, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt., section chief.

"We constantly chase every mil, because it could mean the difference between two or twenty meters," he said.

Due to the precise nature of their profession, artillerymen use mils rather than degrees to determine the gunnery solution. There are 17.77 mils in a degree.

In their never ending quest for excellence, artillerymen ensure that each step of the

gunnery solution is computed down to the exact mil.

The "chasing mils" mentality is reflected in everything the howitzer section does, as well as in the rest of the battery.

"We are always trying to achieve that perfect ballistic solution," said Raymond.

To get close to the perfect ballistic solution, artillery units factor even the smallest details.

From meteorological data, to the weapon's muzzle velocity, everything is monitored. Howitzer sections even keep a close eye on propellant temperature, because numerous factors affect a projectile in flight.

"The fact that we are always accounting for these different conditions just makes us more dangerous on the battlefield," said Raymond.

Although most data collected is calculated by computer, gathering the data and eventually applying it still falls to the Soldiers in the howitzer section and other sections in the battery.

"Attention to detail is not only a part of our job as artillerymen, but it is a way of life when you are on the line," said Spc. Adam Foisy, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt., assistant gunner.

"You double-check everything you do," he added.

To ensure all data is being accurately calculated and applied, artillery batteries use time-tested methods to ensure the howitzer section's success.

"Everything has a dual, independent



Spc. Greg Murray, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt., jacks up a 15,750-pound M-198 howitzer so it can be shifted to a different azimuth of fire.

check," said Raymond.

"From the (fire direction center) to the (forward observers) right down to the (gun line), everything has an extra set of eyes making sure everything is correct."

For a howitzer section, the extra set of eyes that oversees the entire firing process is the section chief.

While the gunner is responsible for setting the deflection, the assistant gunner is responsible for setting the howitzer's quadrant. And the ammunition team chief sets up the right kind of round and fuse combination for the fire mission. With all this going on, the section chief verifies each piece of information.

With precision remaining the key concern of the howitzer section, speed is the second goal.

To achieve speed and precision, howitzer sections practice crew drills. Standardized crew drills involve practicing the basic tasks like ammunition preparation, loading and firing the howitzer. The drills also test contingencies such as misfire procedures.

"We constantly train on our crew drills," said Foisy. "The more we train, the faster we get."

After months, or even years of training, some howitzer sections can get rounds downrange in a matter of seconds.

"Once my crew has a drill down pat, it is amazing how fast we can be," said Antonio.

For artillery Soldiers, affectionately known as "Red legs," speed and efficiency are a matter of pride.

"When everything is going right, it can be one of biggest adrenaline rushes," said Pvt. Colt Harris, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt., cannon crewmember.

"When you are standing behind a howitzer, you feel like one of the most powerful forces on the battlefield," he said. "I couldn't imagine doing anything else."



Spc. Jason Andrews, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt., receives firing data from the fire direction center during crew drills on FOB Salerno.

National PRT aids Kuchi Tribal School

Story by Lt. Col. Susan H. Meisner
and Staff Sgt. Kelly McCargo
Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — Improvements to the Kuchi Tribal School in Kabul are finally visible. Planning for the improvements began in May 2004, and now, from fresh coats of paint in classrooms and dormitories to construction projects around the grounds, the war-torn campus is looking more hospitable.

“It’s taken us several months to get contracts let and the projects under way,” said Lt. Col. Curtis Kinnard, team leader for the National Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The National PRT is a civil affairs operation belonging to the Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan, based in Kabul.

The improvements are part of a joint reconstruction project that includes the Afghan Ministry of Frontier and Tribal Affairs, and Romanian and French Army civil engineers from the National PRT.

The school, for the children of the Kuchi tribe, sustained extensive damage from rocket and small-arms fire during the lengthy Soviet occupation and is now being rebuilt to accommodate the Kuchis’ children.

The Kuchi – Persian for “those who move” – are nomadic people whose tribes are spread throughout Afghanistan. The Kuchi children stay at



Lt. Col. Susan H. Meisner

Army Lt. Col. Curtis Kinnard, National Provincial Reconstruction Team, discusses an appropriate paint color for the cafeteria building of the Kuchi Tribal School in Kabul, with Nassim Yassin, director and engineer of the Fidelity Mining and Construction Company, while students gather around. The NPRT is playing a vital role in refurbishing the school.

the school for nearly nine months, while their parents migrate throughout the Afghan countryside grazing the family’s livestock.

Afghan King Mohammed Zahir Shah built the boarding school in 1949 for the Kuchi tribesmen and named it after Afghan poet and tribal chief Khushal Khan Khattak.

“When I arrived in Afghanistan and saw the school in June of last year, it was a bombed-out husk,” said Rudy Rodrigues, organizational management advisor for MoFTA. “What wasn’t bombed, was stripped and looted many times over.

“But the Kuchi were adamant that their

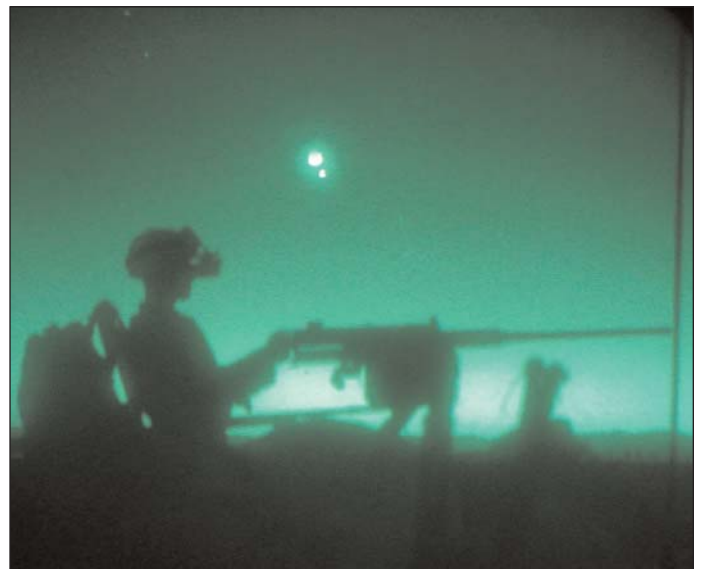
See *School*, Page 14

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

A Soldier from Co. C., 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., pulls security at night in Dila, Afghanistan. The “Wolfhounds” of the 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., provide a key asset in the security and stability of the regions in which they conduct operations.

Photo by Sgt. Maj. Anthony Marrero, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt.

If you have high quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to carls@baf.afgn.army.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.



Mission brings infantrymen together

Story and photo by
Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons
17th Public Affairs Detachment

ZABUL PROVINCE, Afghanistan – As the sun rises over the desolate mountains in Arghndob district in southern Afghanistan, a small group of Soldiers scan the horizon for enemy movement.

The Soldiers, a squad of infantrymen from 2nd Platoon, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, are tasked to provide perimeter security for a small firebase in the remote region.

“They provide primary outer security of the base camp,” said Master Sgt. Bob Labella, 3rd Special Forces Group. “They sit on the towers, they guard the local workers. At night, they have a rotating guard shift on each tower.”

Before rotating in to provide security for the firebase, the Soldiers usually conducted presence patrols throughout the province.

“We’re here to make this a safer place for the people of Afghanistan to live,” said Spc. Jamie Medinger, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Rgt., team leader. “We are making sure the people are able to do their daily routine.”

This squad has only been together for a very short time, but has used the small amount of time wisely to build a team with a good working relationship.

“We’ve been together for about two months,” said Sgt. Louis Chapman, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Rgt., squad leader.

“We all knew each other from different squads. We’ve always gotten along really well. Out here it’s just us, so there’s been a lot of team building,” he said.

When the Soldiers were assigned to the squad, they knew all the tasks and battle drills, but they hadn’t worked closely together, said Chapman.

“I took them out to train a lot when we first got together just to let them get a feel for each other,” he said. “Watching them grow as a team is one of my favorite things about being a leader in the infantry.”

“We all have grown together as a family – like brothers – and none of us wants to see anything happen to any one of us. In that aspect, it raises the performance level, because you want to ensure you’re not the one that’s going to get the other person hurt.”

The Soldiers find themselves growing as a team as they spend more time completing tasks assigned to them.



From left: Pfc. James Sloan, Pfc. Ray Richard, Spc. Nathan Hucker and Spc. Stephan Rzucidlo take advantage of some down-time to bond outside their tent at a firebase in southern Afghanistan, as Richard washes uniforms to prepare for an upcoming mission.

“Each time we go on a mission we get better,” said Spc. Mark Sollars, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Rgt. “We can look at each other and without communicating we know what each person is going to do. The ultimate goal of a squad is to know what each person is doing without having to communicate.”

Motivation is also key to keeping Soldiers mission ready, said Medinger.

“I like seeing my guys be happy and watching them get excited about doing things,” he said.

“The whole preparation for a mission, watching them get ready and everything squared away for the mission, that excites me, motivates me, and makes me want to ensure I’m doing my job to the best of my abilities so I don’t let them down.”

How each infantryman handles situations on the battlefield directly affects the other members of his team, said Chapman.

“We are watching out for each other,” he said. “It’s the intensity out here. We all know the danger is out there.”

“I don’t have to look anywhere but to the guy on my right and my left,” said Medinger. “I know they are there to support me in any situation. They’ve got my back and I’ve got their back, no matter what. That’s a pretty awesome thing.”

The Soldiers’ relationship goes beyond

the confines of work.

“They put us all in one tent so it makes the process of getting to know each other faster,” said Sollars.

“We like to have fun. We riff on each other. That gets rid of the insecurities between each other,” he said.

“I think we are like brothers to each other,” said Medinger. “That’s kind of how the infantry works – we work in a close-knit group anyway. Especially with seeing some of the things we’ve seen, you go through certain things with each other.”

Although living and operating in such close quarters can sometimes create tension, the Soldiers chalk it up to being part of “family” life.

“This is all we’ve got right now,” said Sollars. “All I’ve got is my squad and my platoon. These guys are my friends right now. You become close to these guys, because you see them every day. They become your brothers. Sometimes brothers fight and sometimes they get along, but hey – they’re still brothers.”

After only two months of working together, the squad of infantrymen are completing missions and coming together as a team and family, said Chapman.

“These guys are awesome,” he said. “They really are. I’m very, very proud to have the opportunity to be their squad leader.”

Air Force EOD team cleans up Bagram

Story and photos by
Air Force Staff Sgt.
Jennifer Lindsey
455th Expeditionary Operations
Group

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Most people use tools to fix things, but the 455th Civil Engineer Flight Explosive Ordnance Disposal team here uses their tools to fix things in a slightly different manner.

To these Airmen, blowing something up is the best way to eliminate a hazard, and with an average of three suspected unexploded ordnance calls a day here, business is, well, booming.

“We head out immediately for all calls to eliminate the hazard,” said Staff Sgt. Michael (last name is omitted for security reasons), EOD technician.

However, the type of hazard they’ll face here isn’t usually known until the team is on-site.

Back at their home station of Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, the majority of the calls the explosive ordnance disposal technicians field are to render aircraft munitions and flares safe that didn’t employ or fire correctly, and to inspect and dispose of suspicious packages.

Here at Bagram Air Base, the team goes to the field to identify and dispose of unexploded ordnance found mostly by civil engineers and contractors doing construction projects.

Typically, the UXOs are leftovers from the past 24 years of civil unrest.

“There’s a lot of UXOs out there. The (civil engineer) teams have to keep their eyes open for all kinds of hazards,” said Air Force Master Sgt. Charmaine Regelman, 455th CEF superintendent.

The challenge lies in determining if an object is hazardous or not.

“Sometimes, when people call in suspicious objects, they don’t give us enough information. We need as much information as



Above: An EOD technician holds a scrap of shrapnel from a piece of ordnance.

Left: Airman 1st Class Christopher, 455th Civil Engineer Flight, explosive ordnance disposal technician, “builds up the shot” by placing C-4 on the unexploded ordnance.

Top: Senior Airman David, 455th Civil Engineer Flight, explosive ordnance disposal technician, times the detonation of unexploded ordnance on Bagram Air Base Oct. 6.

the caller can give us. Every UXO has an identifier,” he said.

To help explosive ordnance disposal technicians assess whether an object is unexploded ordnance or just a piece of intimidating-looking junk, callers should offer EOD as

much detail as they can about the object without moving it, while at the same time maintaining a safe distance from it.

Ideally, EOD technicians need the object’s exposed length, diameter, if it has wings or fins, markings or writing, the

object’s color, and if it looks like it has been broken or damaged.

“If a person isn’t sure whether an object is a UXO or not, they should call us,” said Michael. “After all, it’s our job to keep people safe.”

Fire-finder radar offers umbrella of protection

Story and photos by
Spc. Chris Stump
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan — Anti-Coalition militants commonly attack Coalition bases throughout Afghanistan with indirect fire. But many don't consider the fact that once they fire, their position is being tracked.

Armed with fire-finding radar, Coalition assets throughout the country have the ability to track incoming indirect fire and provide timely, accurate retaliation.

Within seconds of a projectile being fired, the ANTPQ-36 fire-finding radar system at Forward Operating Base Salerno begins tracking it, said Sgt. Thomas Carlson, Battery F, 144th Field Artillery Regiment, California Army National Guard, fire-finder radar operator and technician.

The radar operates much like any other radar system, but is designed specifically to track indirect fire. The radar is capable of tracking mortars, artillery and even rockets.

When a projectile is fired within range of the radar, the system picks it up and processes information regarding where the round came from, its speed, flight path and impact location.

The ANTPQ-36 radar system in use at FOB Salerno is officially known as a target acquisition radar system and has the ability to pinpoint the exact grid coordinates where a round is coming from and where it will impact — a vital tool in protecting Coalition forces operating in heavily attacked areas, said Sgt. Martin Avila, Btry. F, 144th FA Rgt., fire-finder radar operator.

The 36-series system is also a "jumpable"

radar, meaning it is able to be moved anywhere by a high mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicle. The system includes a generator which allows the radar section to operate just about anywhere they are needed, regardless of power supply.

The radar station is manned 24-hours-a-day by at least one member of the seven-man radar section. The section includes radar operators and technicians to keep the radar up and running virtually non-stop.

"The radar hasn't been down since we've been here," said Carlson.

Constant checks and maintenance ensure the radar stays running, monitoring for any incoming rounds.

"This radar is one of the best tools available to protect troops," said Avila.

The radar basically takes the place of a forward observer, but with added benefits.

"A forward observer is pretty much only valuable in good conditions," said Avila.

"If there's rain, fog, snow or even darkness, the forward observer is at a disadvantage," he said.

"The radar runs 24/7. It'll run through almost all weather conditions and to a farther range than an observer," said Carlson.

The fire-finding radar can pick up incoming rounds in excess of 14 miles and begin to track them seconds after they are fired, he said.

Aside from its obvious benefits of operating in conditions humans can't and telling exactly where a round will impact, its ability to tell precisely where a round was fired from provides the opportunity to mount a quick counter-fire or the dispatch of a quick reaction force to investigate.

"When they've sent out a QRF to the coordinates we've given them (in the past), they've found stuff," said Avila.

The "stuff" the QRFs find is usu-



Sgts. Thomas Carlson (left) and Martin Avila, both of Btry. F, 144th FA Rgt., fire-finder radar operators, check to ensure the radar they operate is fully operational.

ally mortar tubes and rocket launchers. Often these discoveries lead to the apprehension of the attackers themselves.

But QRFs aren't the only response to an indirect attack.

Often it is a counter-fire mission that is decided upon as a course of action by the commander.

"In (a very short period of time) from when we pick up an incoming round, a battery can return fire to the coordinates of the attack," said Carlson.

And almost all attackers would be in range of the M-198 155mm howitzers.

But it all comes down to the safety of the troops here. With the fire-finding radar, Coalition personnel have early warning of an attack so they can seek cover. They also have a way to immediately respond with a counter-attack of their own.

"The radar is like an umbrella of protection for the area," said Avila. "If someone shoots at us, we can track them in seconds and have fire returned or a QRF sent out to quickly resolve the situation."



Carlson checks the output of the generator that powers the radar system. With a HMMWV and generator, the radar can be moved anywhere to accurately determine the point of origin for incoming rounds.

Legal seminar helps new leaders

Story by Col. Randy Pullen
Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — Representatives from the Afghan Ministry of Defense and General Staff legal departments gathered in Kabul last month for a three-day legal seminar.

This was the second such seminar held — the first one was held in June. Both were organized and conducted by the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies from Newport, R.I.

Attendees at the June seminar heard delegates from Malaysia and the Czech Republic speak about how an Islamic democratic government blended Islamic law with secular law and how a former Communist state transformed to a democracy. These were topics of keen interest to the Afghan legal representatives.

The second seminar, held Sept. 13-15 and hosted by the Afghan MoD and the Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan, focused on ethics in government and government contracting. Specific topics included ethical concerns in public agencies — fraud, waste and abuse, standards of conduct, contracting basics, ethics in contracting, environmental law, and inspector general investigations.

Plenary and small group discussions and case studies of specific issues allowed the attendees to examine these topics in more detail.

These quarterly DIILS seminars are very

important for the future of the Afghan military justice system, according to Navy Cmdr. Chris Jung of OMC-A's Special Staff Directorate.

"We're starting from square one and working on developing the core concepts of each of the legal departments in the Ministry of Defense and General Staff," said Jung, who came to OMC-A from an assignment as the Deputy Fleet Judge Advocate General, Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Va.

"There is no resident legal expertise," said Jung. "They're still working on understanding the scope of their authority in those departments."

Complicating the establishment of the military justice system is the state of legal affairs that exists in Afghanistan.

Those who practice law in Afghanistan receive their legal training primarily in two ways. One way is based on Sharia law from the Quaran. The other is based on attending the Kabul Faculty of Law, which despite its name, has more of a political science or government type of curriculum than a law school curriculum that one would find in the United States.

There is no bar association to regulate the standards for legal training or the qualifications for lawyers.

Further confusing things is a hodgepodge of legal systems in place, ranging from tribal law to alternative dispute resolution to vestiges of the Soviet-style legal system of armed forces courts.

Straightening out the Afghan legal situation is an item of national importance, so much so that the 2004 Afghan constitution mandates that a National Courts Reorganization Law be signed no later than January 2005.

The Special Staff of OMC-A is working to untangle the confusion and put in place a



Sgt. 1st Class Mack Davis

Air Force Maj. Gen. Craig P. Weston, chief of the Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan, waits for the interpreter to finish before continuing with his welcoming remarks to the attendees of the second Defense Institute of International Legal Studies Seminar.

modern military justice system. Because it is an Afghan justice system, it will be a meld of Islamic law and modern secular law, said Jung.

Training is a major part of developing this system.

"The U.S. Navy, Army and Air Force JAG Schools are helping us with primers or basic handbooks on specific areas of law, such as standards of conduct, acquisition law and so on," said Jung.

"They give this material to us, we have them translated, and we bring in subject matter experts to lead the discussion and the teaching of these core competencies in hands-on seminars like those being conducted at the DIILS seminar.

"Each school will provide us with two areas, taken down to the basic components of the subject," he added.

The challenges in developing a military legal system that is fair and just, and one that is faithful to the Afghan culture and the needs of its army and its soldiers, are many.

The main factor in favor of this being done lies with the determination and passion to succeed of the members of the Ministry of Defense and General Staff legal departments.

The Afghans intend to reform their legal establishment to one that has a good standing and level of respect comparable with other nations. In their path toward this goal, they will be helped and encouraged at every step by their friends in the Coalition and the international community.



Col. Randy Pullen

ANA Brig. Gen. Shir Mohammad Zazi, head of the General Staff Legal Department (left), and Maj. Gen. Mohammad Amin Nooristani, head of the Ministry of Defense Legal Department (second from left), listen during a session of the conference Sept. 13-15.

CMA treats Paktika Afghans, builds rapport



Above: A medic from the 27th Eng. Bn. takes the blood pressure and temperature of a local national during a cooperative medical assistance in Paktika province.

Left: Navy Lt. Cmdr. Darnell Blackmon examines a small child suffering from severe vitamin deficiency. The goal of CMAs, in addition to treatment, is to educate.

Story and photos by
Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons
17th Public Affairs Detachment

PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Men of Paktika province gathered early in the morning to watch the Soldiers unload trucks. They eagerly and patiently waited in line to see the medical professionals who came to this remote region in southeastern Afghanistan to offer medical care.

"We're out here on a cooperative medical assistance to try and provide some healthcare to the local nationals around (Forward Operating Site) Carlson," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Darnell Blackmon, Task Force 325th Combat Support Hospital orthopedic surgeon.

"These people really have no access to healthcare," he said. "This also lets them know we care about them on a personal level. We are here in their country trying to complete our mission. We like to provide them some services while we are here."

"We do this because we are trying to become one with the community — to let them know that we are here to do good and see that they benefit," said 1st Lt. Lisa

Dailey, 367th Engineer Bn. physician assistant.

The work of the Soldiers around FOS Carlson has built a strong bond between the community members and Coalition forces, and has caused the community to open up to the Soldiers. This sort of assistance is beneficial to Coalition forces in the area, said Capt. Tamara Smith, 96th Civil Affairs Bn. team leader. The work the military personnel in the area have done has built some solid relationships.

To further these relationships, there are ongoing projects, like the CMAs, to continue to provide for all the people of the country, including women and children.

Culturally, the Afghan women can only be seen by female providers, said Dailey.

Female medical care providers came to the CMA from different hospitals around the country to accommodate these cultural sensitivities.

"This is the second CMA we've done in this region," said Smith. "The first one didn't have many women. Now we have female medical assets and there have been many more females coming."

"I think the female (healthcare professionals) being here brings the female locals in and lets them see the equality between men and women," said 1st Lt. Leslie Cooper, TF 325th CSH nurse.

"It lets them see us as strong women and see that we are respected as women and we are treated as equals," she said.

"I like feeling that maybe we have shown the women that you can come out here, it's not just for the men, that you are just as important, just as valued."

The positive effects of working closely with the community should help future generations of Afghans.

"For the children to see women working and see that you can be educated, you can go places, you can do things, see things, meet new people. It opens up a whole new world to them," said Cooper.

This CMA is just part of the civil affairs work in the region. Providing this type of care to the population assists with the overall mission in the area.

"It helps tremendously," said Blackmon. "The Soldiers who have established this unit have done a tremendous job in a short period of time."

"It lets them know we're not here today, gone tomorrow," said Cooper. "It's a continuing theme day after day, week after week. The people who are working in this area are going to stay here."

By bringing medical care to the people, the Soldiers are creating a lasting bond with the people.

"It goes back to the fact that we are doing what we can to help the people here," said Smith. "And they do what they can to help us."

Leaders' diligence key to weapons safety

Safeguarding the Coalition

Story and photo by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

AFGHANISTAN — Nearly everywhere one goes in Afghanistan, someone is seen carrying a weapon. The constant presence of weapons, ranging from sidearms to crew-served weapons, makes weapons safety paramount to all in Operation Enduring Freedom.

For those operating in more tactical areas, where weapons remain locked and loaded for extended periods, the diligence and experience of Coalition members and their leadership remains key in avoiding accidental discharges.

On Forward Operating Base Orgun-E, weapons safety has developed into somewhat of a culture for the "Wolfhounds" of 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, said Command Sgt. Maj. David Yates, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., command sergeant major.

"The key to our success has been the accountability of team and squad leaders in ensuring the safety goes on all the time," said Yates.

"Weapons safety is constantly preached and always in the back of the mind of each Soldier."

As a part of the weapons safety culture in the unit, training and drills are something the unit conducts whenever possible, especially after becoming aware of an unsafe act.

"No matter where we are, or what we are doing, we will instantaneously begin remedial training after observing an unsafe act," said Yates.

While weapons vary from pistols and rifles to crew-served machine guns and grenade launchers, safety procedures don't, said Staff Sgt. Jay Webb, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., anti-tank platoon squad leader.

As a leader in a unit that has a high number of crew-served, heavy weapons, Webb said one key to his unit's flawless safety record has simply been experience.

In order to maintain the skills necessary to operate their weapons in combat, Webb said his unit gains experience at regular range training.



Cpl. Brian Basque, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., team leader, observes as Spc. Robert Decarolis, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., clears an M2 .50 caliber machine gun.

"The key to our weapons safety is practice, practice, practice," said Webb.

But Webb's AT platoon uses the range as more than a place to practice accuracy and target acquisition.

Those elements are sometimes even secondary. At the range, his platoon focuses on familiarization drills and rehearsals.

"We practice all our loading and unloading procedures as well as locking and clearing and correcting malfunctions," said Webb. "The range is one of the safest environments because the weapons are pointed down range."

"We will conduct all our drills until they are down cold," he said.

Ranges in Afghanistan have also evolved into a place for more realistic rehearsals to prepare for enemy contact.

"Rehearsals are very important, because what the Soldiers do with their weapons will become instinctive at the right times," said Webb.

By always focusing on what they will do when they face possible enemy contact while on a mission, weapons safety becomes a team approach.

For the Wolfhounds, missions in Paktika province have lasted as long as two weeks. During these missions, Soldiers must remain ready to use their weapon at any time, which creates an atmosphere for possible weapon accidents.

To combat these inherent dangers caused by having weapons in firing condition, each unit develops procedures when they encounter different situations.

Just as Coalition members follow procedures when entering larger bases like Bagram Air Base and Kandahar Airfield, the tactical units use procedures when entering smaller, less populated firebases, and even when entering villages.

"Our gunners always know where to point their muzzles, when to lock and clear, and when to stay ready," said Sgt. Michael Spurlock, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., AT platoon team leader.

"Leaders are also always there every step of the way to make sure these standards are enforced."

It is not an option for leaders to be absent when a crew-served weapon is locked and cleared. As a result, the unit has had no accidental discharges, said Spurlock.

As a continuation of the weapons safety culture for the Wolfhounds, leaders are always reminding Soldiers what the weapons are for.

"I always say, 'There is no room for Hollywood on this ride,'" said Sgt. William Spencer, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., AT platoon team leader. "Messing around with weapons can get somebody killed."

Whether it is the team approach, practicing drills or adhering to a strict regimen of procedures, successful weapons safety remains simple.

"There is no real secret," said Webb. "Leaders must stay diligent with their Soldiers and must maintain the same intensity and attention to detail every day."

Pirate: Afghan village receives medical support from Soldiers

continued from Page 4

One of those Soldiers is Staff Sgt. Michael Kirby, who served as the head of security during this most recent mission in Jildalek.

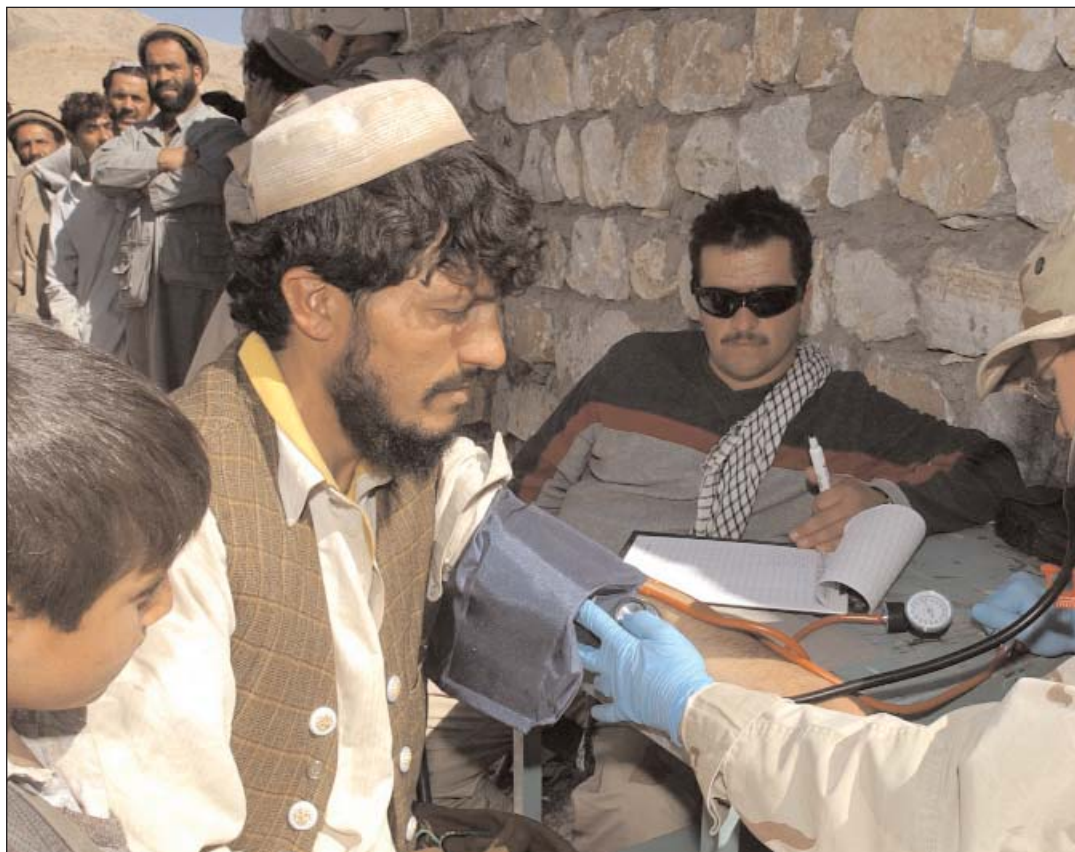
"We volunteer to go out there to hopefully improve the lives of the people here. It's good to go out and see how the people live and what's going on outside the base," he said. "It's kind of an eye opener."

Kirby, who has also witnessed the desire for medical aid from the villagers first-hand, was excited "to actually have these people looked at and get their ailments treated," he said.

Although the goal of the day was to treat as many people as possible, humanitarian aid wasn't forgotten. Blankets and other items were given to the village to be distributed upon the departure of the Soldiers. The organization of the events of the day proved proficient and added to the overall success of the visit.

"They're all great trips," said Pace. "But today was extra great. Everything happened like clockwork."

The Soldiers hope future trips prove as successful as this



Staff Sgt. Monica R. Garreau

Sgt. James Judd, TF Wings medic, checks the blood pressure of an Afghan man as part of the medical screening process Oct. 14. The Soldiers were in Jildalek village providing medical care to the villagers who were adopted by TF Pirate.

one, as they plan to continue their bimonthly visits to Jildalek — providing more humanitarian and medical aid, as well as assisting with ongoing well and school construction projects — through the end of their deployment here next spring.

School: National PRT helps provide for Kuchi students

continued from Page 7

children receive an education at all costs, and we set to rebuilding the school," he said.

"The Kuchi tribal leaders met with President (Hamid) Karzai and he reassured (the tribal leaders) that he would support the reopening of the school," said Rodrigues. "After the discussion, an elder calmly stood up and said, 'My son will one day become the president of Afghanistan.'"

The school has 1,500 students in grades five through 12. U.N. Children's Fund tents are serving as temporary work spaces for kitchen and cafeteria workers during the construction period. One marked improvement will be indoor plumbing, a luxury not currently available at the school.

The kitchen will also receive a major overhaul. At present, large cauldrons of rice simmer over wood fires in a scene so rustic it is hard to imagine without being there. Refrigerators and gas stoves will grace the refurbished kitchen sometime in the next year. Improvements to the cafeteria will include tables with benches for the students, who presently eat standing up at long tables in the cafeteria.

After observing athletic competitions and school assemblies conducted in the dark, Kinnard also arranged for outdoor pole lamps, noting "future assemblies won't be in the dark. At the last function, we used our vehicle headlights to light the gathering."

The Ministry of Water and Power completed the school's connection to the

electrical power grid last month, providing electric lights to the classrooms and dormitories for the first time.

In addition to the construction work, teams from the Office of Military Cooperation — Afghanistan have delivered school supplies donated by family members and friends in the United States.

General Director of the school, Hafizula Samsor, expressed his appreciation for the donations, noting that there are many other schools in the Kabul area that OMC-A could have chosen to help.

All schools will receive help as part of the on-going reconstruction process, but for the Kuchis, the work at their school results in visible improvements that students and teachers can immediately appreciate.

Soldiers use airwaves to entertain troops

Story and photos by
Spc. Dijon Rolle

17th Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Soldiers from Task Force Diamondhead are taking to the airwaves in Afghanistan, bringing the sound of familiar music to Coalition forces serving at Kandahar Airfield.

90.1 FM Diamondhead Radio is a 12-watt radio station run by Soldiers from the task force's communications shop. The station is the brainchild of Staff Sgt. Erik Averill, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment, Task Force

Diamondhead, signal support systems specialist.

Averill says he came up with the idea after talking to a Soldier who was worried about being able to listen to his favorite music while in Afghanistan. He was also inspired during a past 6-month deployment to Egypt.

"We ran a radio station in Egypt, so I thought it wouldn't be too hard to run a radio station out in Afghanistan," said Averill. "So I just started looking up some stuff on the Internet, put together a proposal and took it to our battalion executive officer Major (Greg) Baker and he signed off on it. We got the equipment and put it together."

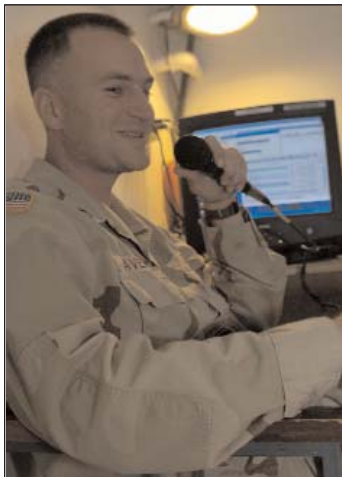
90.1 FM's equipment — a transmitter, antenna, laptop computer and mixing board — barely take up a corner in the Administrative Logistics Operation Center communications shop. Soldiers from units stationed all over KAF come in and take their turns as guest disc jockeys.

The station plays a variety of music, from alternative rock to rhythm and blues.

"Music is important, it's a form of art and expression," said Spc. Dana Maddox, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd



Spc. Takema Randolph, HHC, 25th Avn. Rgt., cues up a song during her radio show on 90.1 FM Diamondhead Radio at Kandahar Airfield.



Above: Staff Sgt. Erik Averill, HHC, 25th Avn. Rgt. (left), and Randolph share duties as DJs during a radio show.

Top: Averill relays an MWR message to his listeners.

Battalion, 25th Avn. Rgt., Task Force Diamondhead, signal support system specialist.

"We try and mix it up for everybody," she said.

Task Force Diamondhead Soldiers say the radio station is a way to keep busy during their downtime.

"There's not much to do out here," said Maddox. "When you have a little free time, this is something that can keep you out of trouble, keeps you focused and doesn't take up much of your time — and it's fun. It's a morale booster."

Although the station has been on the air for nearly five months, most listeners are slowly finding out about it through word of mouth.

"I was skeptical at first, because something like this has the potential of getting too big — our primary mission is to

support the task force," said Capt. Robert Hamilton, 2nd Bn., 25th Avn. Rgt., Task Force Diamondhead, signal officer.

"I have to compliment everyone in my section for doing this, maintaining it in a professional manner and still performing their day-to-day missions. I think it's great for morale, not just for us but for those that are listening."

90.1 FM Diamondhead Radio is on the air 24-hours a day, seven days a week and includes a playlist of almost 14,000 songs. They welcome anyone who wants to bring in music or DJ. The station's signal can be picked up 10 miles outside of Kandahar Airfield.

"After setting this up and doing this, it's shown me that music is important to a lot of people," said Averill. "It's a good thing for the Soldiers."

Vigilance

